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ABSTRACT

Compared in this study is the power of a directed, conscious attempt to reduce stereotyping through the use of selected individuals who have achieved renown in endeavors not usually identified with the group of their origin with a similar effort which utilizes eminent persons on the basis of their celebrity with no regard to the nature of that celebrity. The hypothesis that a directed counter-stereotypic approach in a multi-ethnic setting would reduce stereotypic thinking to a greater extent than a random approach was not supported, however. Analysis by school, by classroom, and by target ethnic group yielded only one statistically significant result among the comparisons made and that one was in the direction opposite to the one posited--the control group's stereotypic perception of blacks was significantly lower than that of an experimental group on the value thermometer scale. Although the hypothesis was not confirmed, the finding that the stereotype aimed at blacks is significantly greater than that applied to Polish Americans agrees with the multitude of research and empirical observation that reveals that race, particularly the black race, is a substantially more powerful stimulator of prejudice than ethnicity. (Author/EB)

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A COMPARISON OF THE
EFFECTIVENESS OF TWO APPROACHES TO
THE TEACHING OF
MULTIETHNIC STUDIES

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The study arises from a juncture of two areas of research and theory, one located primarily in social psychology, the other within the domain of educational philosophy and curriculum. The latter, multiethnic education has appeared on the scene relatively recently but has already generated substantial dialogue in the educational community and appears to have made its mark, in various forms, in school systems throughout the country. Broadly speaking, multiethnic education can be described as that formulation which stresses the importance of acquainting students with the histories and cultures of the diverse ethnic groups which comprise the American population as a substitute for what is perceived to be the quasi-monopoly of the dominant Anglo-American group. Through proponents of this view differ from each other in terms of certain objectives and curricular specifics, they appear to agree that multiethnic studies ought to eventuate in greater self-respect on the part of heretofore submerged and/or maligned ethnic groups; in more sophisticated, realistic, and benign perceptions of the numerous ethnic/racial religious groups extant; and a more broad-minded vision of ethnicity by all students.

The socio-psychological issue of prejudicial attitude and behavior and its amelioration has engaged the attention of social scientists for some fifty years. Beginning in the 1920's scholars have sought to define prejudice, delineate its component parts, and examine the circumstances under which it is manifested; finally, they have tried to conceptualize and to assay the means by which it can be controlled. Regarding the latter, there have been studies, particularly during the 1940's and 1950's which have contributed to theory formation in this realm. However, most of this work has taken place in settings other than scholastic; there is little direct evidence regarding the strength of a classroom variable as an agent of change of prejudicial outlook.

Through research pertaining to the influence of classroom teaching as a modifier of attitude is sparse, and Jencks contends that the school has little impact on student learning,¹ there is some indication that teaching may affect outlook. In a survey of studies relative to the impact of teaching, Powell discovered that the classroom could indeed influence learning, at least in the realms of mathematics and reading.² In a response to a survey of multiethnic educational practices, a number of social studies chairpersons reported impressions of attitudinal and behavioral change on the part of senior high school students after exposure to a multiethnic curriculum.³ Given the intimation that overt teaching can engender learning, impressionistic evidence regarding the power of multiethnic studies, and the lack of rigorous evaluation of that variable in a classroom environment, it seemed appropriate to subject at least some aspect of multiethnicity to experimental verification of its efficacy as a moulder of thought and feeling. The present study constitutes such an endeavor.

On the basis of philosophical reasons expressed elsewhere,^{4,5} the authors selected that objective of multiethnic education which stresses the dissolution of stereotype as the variable to be examined. This counter-stereotype approach to multiethnic education is grounded in the recognition of stereotypy as a continuing force in human behavior and one which constitutes a significant component of prejudicial attitude and, ultimately, discriminatory behavior.⁶ It is differentiated from the usual approach to the selection of curricular materials relative to multiethnicity in that the latter generally stresses elements which engage quick attention without regard to the underlying - and possibly damaging - psychological message conveyed whereas the former, by definition, emphasizes elements carefully chosen to counter stereotypic impressions which society at large has imposed.

Content relative to multiethnicity has had two principal facets: information pertaining to a group as a whole and stories about the lives and achievements of notable members of that group. It is the second aspect which illustrates the danger alluded to above; in citing lives of prominent personalities, the teacher may inadvertently reinforce a stereotype in the minds of the students. Thus, the contribution of Haym Solomon to the cause of the American Revolution, the donation of his monetary fortune, was a significant one and of the kind that can be appreciated by adults who undergo the experience of earning a living and supporting a family. However, to the partially formed psyche of the child or adolescent, such a contribution can easily be translated into a confirmation of the Jewish affinity for and association with money.

Similarly, the invocation of the names of Willie Mays and Hank Aaron, Joe DiMaggio and Frank Sinatra, Stan Musial and Greg Luzinski, can imprint upon young minds a vision of Blacks, Italians, and Poles as muscular, athletically accomplished and, by implication, not very intellectual. It is no disparagement of the achievements of gifted individuals to note that their work, estimable and worthy to the sophisticated, can enhance stereotypic pictures in the eyes of the naive. Nor is it contented that all or most schools are guilty of unconsciously promoting stereotypes. Examination of texts and curricular materials reveal a mixed picture of the personality exemplars employed to represent the various ethnic/racial communities; some of those do embody characteristics which refute the customary portrait of their ancestral group. Nevertheless, it does appear that a substantial number of the exemplars transmit a stereotypic connection for the cultures from which they spring. The study herein described is a comparison of the power of a directed, conscious attempt to reduce stereotypy through the use of selected individuals who have achieved renown in endeavors not usually

identified with the group of their origin with a similar effort which utilizes eminent persons on the basis of their celebrity with no regard to the nature of that celebrity. Inasmuch as it is impossible to treat all ethnic/racial groups, it was decided to limit the effort to Black Americans, Jewish Americans, Italian Americans, Polish Americans, and Puerto Rican Americans, groups which, certainly in the New York area, have been objects of substantial amounts of distorted and hostile perceptions.

Definition of Variables

The independent variable was the occupational/professional background of figures representing an ethnic/racial group. For the experimental, Counter-Stereotype treatment, the figures selected were derived from an inventory judged by the authors to represent, through their work, qualities which contradict the stereotypic impression of their host group. The final selection of these personalities was made by the classroom teachers on the basis of their estimate of recognizability and psychical impact. These persons were then assigned to pupils by the teachers, either as subjects for formal class reports or for class discussion, depending upon the school.

In the case of the control treatment--to be referred to hereafter as the Random/Famous treatment--the critical figures emerged from either the textual materials customarily in use or from the selection by committees of students, again, according to the routine of the schools. This variation in procedure was permitted in order to allow the treatments to conform as far as possible to the curriculum of the school and methodology of each teacher. In the case of school A, both teachers followed the same routine: for the CS classes, they assigned counter-stereotypical personalities to the various committees; in the

Random/Famous classes, they permitted students to select--with no imposed stipulations--representatives of ethnic groups. The one teacher in school B assigned personalities to the CS groups and utilized textbook mentioned figures for his R/F class.

Subjects

School A, from which 4 classes were drawn, is a school for the intellectually gifted located in New York City. About 35 to 40% of the students are Jewish, the largest single group; between 1/4 to 1/5 Black and Latin-American; the remainder fairly well distributed among other cultural communities, with a disproportionately large Asian population. The two pairs of experimental classes were 7th graders studying cultural anthropology; the experiment was executed in the unit on definitions of human groups. School B is located in a large suburban New York community with a predominantly Caucasian population of which Italian and Jewish are numerically modal. There is also a liberal representation of many other ethnic groups but relatively few Black and Latin-American students. The sample classes were 11th graders studying American History; the experimental treatment was embodied in the unit on immigration.

Procedure

Six classes, four from school A and two from school B were involved. The six classes were subdivided into three parallel pairs controlled for grade and ability level and shielded against other contaminating factors through random assignment. No pre-test of stereotype/prejudice viewpoint was administered because of the possibility of "telegraphing" the intent of the study and because of its superfluity: it has been demonstrated that in a situation of random dis-

tribution of subjects, an equal amount of stereotypic thinking may be presumed for both experimental and control groups.⁷

In School A, the independent variable was embedded in a unit devoted to the development and clarification of concepts of race, ethnicity, religion, culture, and other basic anthropological/sociological definitions of human subgroups. For both treatment classes, the two teachers gradually led into a discussion of New York City and its component ethnic/racial groups. After a brief survey of these groups and their situations in New York, the teachers subdivided the classes into 5 committees, each one representing one of 5 target groups-- Blacks, Jews, Italians, Puerto Ricans, Poles. Both classes were informed that the committees' task was to research and report upon the lives of prominent members of that community. At this point, the divergence between the two treatments emerged. In the case of the Random/Famous group, each committee was allowed to select the people upon whose lives they would report. The counter-stereotype classes however, were assigned celebrities culled by the teachers from the counter-stereotype personality inventories with which they had been furnished. As noted, decisions were made on the basis of recognition, impressiveness of achievement to pupils of that age, and distance from qualities customarily associated with the parent group.

In School B, the experimental approaches were embedded in the unit on contribution of the non-Anglo immigrants to the American scene. The Random/Famous class followed the customary curricular route, developing the activities of four (Latin-Americans were omitted) target groups as a whole and then citing the achievements of prominent representatives of each group as described in the class text. In the opinion of the class instructor, these figures did indeed convey stereotypic associations to the class; hence, the content of that class

contrasted with the Counter-Stereotype class in which the teacher cited personalities only from the counter-stereotypic inventories. The decisions on those individuals were made, as in the instance of School A, on the basis of the factors of recognition, impressiveness, and degree of distance of accomplishment from the conventional attribute of the group.

In both schools, the experimental situation lasted between one and two weeks. It is acknowledged that this relatively brief period of time might lack the intensity required to effect change. However, two considerations dictated brevity. First, there was the need to accommodate the curricula of the schools, and second, an extended period of time increased danger of introduction of contaminated variables. Several weeks after the completion of that period, the two instruments were administered to measure the extent of stereotypic thinking among all students and to measure differences in its extent between the experimental (CS) subjects and the controls (RF).

Instruments

Two measures of stereotypic thinking were employed. The first is a "feeling thermometer" scale, developed at the Institute for Social Research of the University of Michigan, designed to gauge a generalized impression of a designated individual or group. The second is an ad hoc measure developed by the authors employing Q-sort or "jury" technique. It consists of a series of statements relative to ethnic, racial, religious, economic, educational, and geographical groups; each statement is an assertion of group characteristic or broad generality about human behavior to which the respondent is asked to indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement or neutrality.

The first step in its development was the drawing up of a pool of items which expressed stereotypic sentiments. The items were then submitted to a panel

of six scholars with instructions to rate each item on a scale of A to E, with A representing the highest rating and E the lowest. Five factors formed the basis of judgment:

- a) existence of a small grain of truth to the statement.
- b) its stereotypic exaggeration.
- c) likelihood of junior/senior high school students being familiar with the message the statement conveys.
- d) virtual impossibility of junior and senior high school students' capacity to verify the reality or lack thereof of the statement.
- e) avoidance of frivolity or any other quality which would cause its rejection out of hand.

The statement ultimately included in the questionnaire consisted of the five most highly rated for each of the target groups plus the top two or three items for a number of other groups, both ethnic and occupational/professional. The purposes of the latter were twofold: one, misdirection of the subjects, who might have otherwise made an easy connection between their recent teaching and the testing instrument thus leading to a possible contaminant and second, as a measure of the extent of the power of the experimental variable. It was reasoned that if the variable could shake stereotypic images of the target groups, it might strike at the concept of stereotypy itself and thus yield carryover effects to collectivities not treated in the experimental situations.

Students were guaranteed both personal and group identification anonymity. Though knowledge of the latter could have provided useful data, it was decided to forego this benefit in favor of subject comfort and reassurance.

Findings

The hypothesis that a directed counter-stereotypic approach in a multi-ethnic setting would reduce stereotypic thinking to a greater extent than a random approach was not supported. Analysis by school, by classroom, by target ethnic group yielded only one statistically significant result among the numerous comparisons made and that one was in the direction opposite to the one posited--the control group's stereotypic perception of Blacks was significantly lower than that of tag experimental group on the value thermometer scale.

Collateral findings included the following:

- a) there was a statistically significant difference between stereotypy directed toward Blacks--the entity which received the most negative evaluation--and that accorded Poles--the recipient of the least negative evaluation.
- b) there was a consistently greater amount of stereotypic thinking in school B than in school A. No differences achieved statistical significance though that condition was approached in the case of several target groups.

Discussion

When an experimental situation fails to confirm a hypothesis, it is tempting to suggest that the result is attributable to the inadequacy of the measuring instrument. However, such an explanation would be a lame one in this instance as scores for the experimental and control groups with the exception noted above were virtually identical on all dimensions measured. It must therefore be assumed that the experimental variable either lacked intrinsic credibility or if it did not, was not accorded sufficient strength in terms of time

and development to achieve its objective. Some impressionistic evidence for the latter case can be inferred from teacher accounts of student reactions, particularly in school A. In the CS classes of that institution, several children expressed amazement at the revelation of ethnic identity of personalities examined; they appeared to have been affected by the information.

The insufficient development explanation also conforms to those theories of prejudicial thinking which attribute its origin to deep-seated psychological factors unamenable to casual or superficial treatment. In addition, the use of exemplar figures may have run afoul of what Allport called "enclosure," i.e., the tendency to exempt specific individuals from a stereotype while retaining it for the vast majority of the "absolved ones" fellow ethnics.⁸ Perhaps future research endeavors should consider the construction of multi-faceted experimental variables rather than uni-dimensional ones, even at the risk of some experimental contamination.

The finding that the stereotypy aimed at Blacks is significantly greater than that applied to Polish-Americans agrees with the multitude of research and empirical observation that reveals that race, particularly the Black race, is a substantially more powerful stimulator of prejudice than ethnicity. It also tends to refute Novak's contention that while ethnic Catholics are the major victims of ethnic/racial prejudice in the U.S. today.⁹

The "wrong way" result of significantly lesser stereotypy towards Blacks in the control group on one of the instruments does not appear to divulge anything noteworthy. Given the reality that only one of 19 comparisons yielded such a result, it appears to be a random phenomenon.

Finally, it is worthy of note that stereotype scores in school A were consistently lower than in school B. As previously noted, the school A pupils

are intellectually gifted; in addition, they stem from upper-middle class, well educated homes. The school B population is roughly average to slightly above average in intelligence and lower-middle class in background. This discrepancy may be a reflection of Glock's finding that "cognitive sophistication" is the critical element in determining prejudicial outlook.¹⁰ If so, it calls for a breakdown of the constituent elements of "cognitive sophistication" and their evaluation under experimental conditions as was attempted in this study. Counter-stereotypy, fortified with additional concepts found to be compelling and allowed greater time for development may ultimately evince effectiveness as a modifier of attitude in subsequent experiments.

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TABLE I
POST TEST RESULTS
EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS ON ATTITUDINAL QUESTIONNAIRE
FIVE TARGET ETHNIC GROUPS

		<u>Black</u>	<u>Jewish</u>	<u>Puerto Rican</u>	<u>Italian</u>	<u>Polish</u>
Experimental (CS) (N=78)						
	Mean	17.48	16.6	13.76	13.52	13.76
	S.D.	5.72	6.07	5.73	6.18	5.73
Level of Significance		N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Control (RF) (N=77)						
	Mean	17.40	15.9	13.36	14.97	13.36
	S.D.	4.84	6.16	6.13	5.40	6.13

-
1. Score range from 5 to 35.
 2. Low score represents relatively lower stereotyping; high scores equal higher stereotyping.
 3. A t-test (pooling the variance) was used to test for differences between means.

TABLE 2

POST TEST RESULTSEXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS ON ATTITUDINAL QUESTIONNAIREFIVE NON-TARGET ETHNIC GROUPS

		<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Cuban</u>	<u>Greek</u>	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Mexican</u>
Experimental (CS) (N=78)	Mean	6.25	6.03	7.00	6.52	6.85
	S.D.	2.83	1.93	2.46	2.36	2.90
Level of Significance		N.S	N.S	N.S	N.S	N.S
Control (RF) (N=77)	Mean	7.52	6.02	7.24	6.32	6.46
	S.D.	2.72	2.45	2.57	2.46	2.56

-
1. Score range from 2 to 14.
 2. Low score represents relatively lower stereotyping; high scores equal higher stereotyping.
 3. A t-test (pooling the variance) was used to test for differences between means.

TABLE 3

POST TEST RESULTSEXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS ON VALUE THERMOMETER9 ETHNIC GROUPS

		<u>Black</u>	<u>Jewish</u>	<u>Puerto Rican</u>	<u>Italian</u>	<u>Polish</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Greek</u>	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Mexican</u>
Experimental (CS) (N=80)										
	Mean	5.51	7.17	4.55	6.98	6.17	5.97	5.00	6.88	4.87
	S.D.	2.37	2.35	1.85	2.41	2.17	1.93	1.75	2.12	1.97
Level of Significance										
		.01	N.S	N.S	N.S	N.S	N.S	N.S	N.S	N.S
Control (RF) (N=66)										
	Mean	6.80	7.14	4.75	6.81	6.07	6.33	5.03	7.10	5.01
	S.D.	2.01	2.47	2.01	2.37	2.41	2.15	1.93	2.14	1.86

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1. Score range from 1 to 9
 2. Low scores indicate negative feelings; higher scores represent more positive feelings.
 3. A t-test (pooling the variance) was used to measure the difference between means.